

Message Text

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SUBJECT: THE ARRAY OF POLITICAL FORCES

1. PEREDA'S GOVERNMENT IS HAVING A DIFFICULT TIME CONSOLIDATING ITS POSITION. THE ATTEMPT TO GET THE GOVERNMENT ACCEPTED AS "LEGITIMATE", BY VIRTUE OF PEREDA'S PLURALITY IN THE JULY 9 ELECTIONS, HAS FAILED. BOLIVIANS VIEW THE PEREDA GOVERNMENT AS A DE FACTO, MILITARY GOVERNMENT WITH NO LICENSE TO GOVERN FOR THE FOUR YEARS PRESCRIBED BY THE CONSTITUTION. PEREDA'S PROBLEM IS NOW TO FIND AN ALTERNATE BASIS ON WHICH TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE. STARTING FROM THE UNFORTUNATE POINT OF HIS INTER-MILITARY SERVICE COUP, HE HAS ONLY TWO ROUTES TO CONSOLIDATING HIS GOVERNMENT--THE FORCEFUL REPRESSION OF HIS MILITARY AND CIVILIAN OPPONENTS, OR PLACING HIMSELF AND HIS GOVERNMENT FIRMLY IN THE HISTORIC COURSE OF RETURNING BOLIVIA TO CIVILIAN, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT. THE BACKLASH OF THE COUP ITSELF HAS BEEN PUSHING PEREDA TOWARD THE LATTER COURSE, EVEN THOUGH THIS WAS CLEARLY NOT HIS AND HIS MILITARY SUPPORTERS' INTENTION.

2. YET THE MAIN FEATURE OF THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IS NOT STRATEGIC COURSES, BUT TENSION, DIVISIONS AND DISARRAY. THE MILITARY HAS CLEARLY OVERSTAYED ITS WELCOME AND THIS

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IS THE MAIN SOURCE OF THE DIVISIONS NOW PLAGUING BOLIVIA. BUT THE WAY TO UNIFYING THE COUNTRY UNDER CIVILIAN, ELECTED GOVERNMENT IS FAR FROM CLEAR.

3. PEREDA'S INNER CORE OF DECISION-MAKERS CONSISTS OF HIMSELF, INTERIOR MINISTER COLONEL FAUSTINO RICO TORO, AND TWO CIVILIANS, EDWARD TAPIA AND JAVIER ARCE. RICO TORO IS AN

AGGRESSIVE, DOMINEERING, ROCK-HARD-LINER, BUT HE IS NOT A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE MILITARY CLUB AND CANNOT DELIVER THE MILITARY BEHIND HIS VIEWS. TAPIA AND ARCE (BOTH LONG RESENTED BY THE MILITARY) FAVOR NEW ELECTIONS AT A DATE DESIGNED TO MINIMIZE DIVERGENCIES FROM WIDELY VARYING PREFERENCES OF MILITARY AND CIVILIAN ELEMENTS, PROBABLY AROUND JANUARY 1980. PEREDA IS NOW LEANING THEIR WAY, BUT ONLY HE AMONG THIS GROUP CAN SELL ANYTHING TO THE MILITARY AND PEREDA'S STOCK THERE IS VERY LOW.

4. BY THREATENING USE OF THE AIR FORCE AGAINST THE LA PAZ ARMY GARRISONS ON THE DAY OF HIS COUP, PEREDA HAS BROKEN NINE OF THE MILITARY'S TEN COMMANDMENTS. HE BROKE THE TENTH BY PASSING OVER ALL THE GENERALS OF THE CLUB IN HIS APPOINTMENTS AND FILLING ALL THE KEY JOBS WITH LESS SENIOR OFFICERS WHOSE ONLY APPARENT QUALIFICATION WAS LOYALTY TO THE PEREDA FORCES ON COUP DAY. THERE ARE LOTS OF PERSONAL RESENTMENTS. THERE IS WIDESPREAD FEELING THAT THE COUP HAS HUMILIATED THE ARMED FORCES AT HOME AND BOLIVIA ABROAD. THE MAKINGS OF COUP ACTIVITY ARE PRESENT, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE NO DEFINITE MOVES IN SIGHT YET. CLEARLY PEREDA IS NOT IN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY AND WILL NOT BE ALLOWED ANY FALSE STEPS IN THE NEXT EN DAYS.

5. IN THIS ENVIRONMENT, ONE INCIDENT OF CAMPESINO-MILITARY VIOLENCE IN THE YUNGAS REGION HAS SENT TREMORS
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THROUGH THE MILITARY AND BOLIVIA. THE MILITARY-CAMPESINO PACT, A PILLAR OF BANZER'S LEGITIMACY, IS DEAD--ALTHOUGH BANZER SEEMS TO THINK HE CAN SALVAGE A BIT OF THIS ALLIANCE IF HE DISASSOCIATES HIMSELF FROM PEREDA. TO MAY IN THE MILITARY, CAMPESINO-MILITARY VIOLENCE WILL BE THE ULTIMATE DEMONSTRATION THAT THE MILITARY MUST GET OUT OF GOVERNMENT SOON TO PRESERVE WHAT IS LEFT OF ITS ACCEPTANCE AS A SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FORCE. TO SOME HARD-LINERS THE SAME EVENTS WILL MEAN THAT THE MILITARY MUST NOW MAN THE BARRICADES AGAINST "EXTREMISM."

6. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PREDICT WHAT OBJECTIVES WOULD BE REPRESENTED IN A NEW COUP AGAINST PEREDA. IT COULD BE ELECTIONS SOMEWHAT EARLIER THAN PEREDA IS NOW CONTEMPLATING; IT COULD BE NO ELECTIONS AT ALL AND REPRESSIVE GOVERNMENT.

7. THE CIVILIAN SECTOR WILL ALSO NOT BE ABLE TO APPROACH AGREEMENT ON A NEW ELECTION DATE. HERNAN SILES, PERHAPS THE ONLY MAJOR CANDIDATE IN JULY 9 ELECTIONS WHO WILL RUN IN THE NEXT, IS FOR THE MOMENT PRESSING FOR NEW ELECTIONS THIS YEAR. HE HAS POSITIONED HIMSELF TO BENEFIT MOST

FROM GROWING ANTI-MILITARIST SENTIMENT. BUT HE IS TILL
SEEN AS THE ENEMY BY THE MILITARY, BECAUSE OF THE FAR-LEFT
ELEMENTS THAT FIGURE IN HIS COALITION AND HIS STRIDENT
TACTICS (ESPECIALLY HIS PERSONAL HUNGER STRIKE WHICH HELPED
PROVOKE THE COUP FOR PEREDA). THE TWO MAJOR CENTER PARTIES,
THE HISTORIC MNR OF VICTOR PAZ AND THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS
WHO BACKED GENERAL BERNAL, DESPERATELY NEED AT LEAST A YEAR
TO REGROUP AND DEVELOP NEW CIVILIAN CANDIDATES. NEITHER PAZ NOR
BERNAL ATTRACTED MORE THAN REGIONAL SUPPORT IN THE ELECTIONS.
(EVEN SILES GOT FEW VOTES OUTSIDE THREE ANTIPLANO
PROVINCES.) THE MNR-H HEAVIES NOW CONSIDER THAT PAZ SHOULD
NOT RUN AGAIN. THE PDC IS NOT GOING TO SUPPORT ANY GENERAL
NEXT TIME. BOTH PARTIES ARE, IN SHORT, SUFFERING FROM THE
GAP IN CIVILIAN POLITICAL LEADERSHIP WHICH HAS RESULTED FROM
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A DECADE OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT. SILES' UDP COULD CON-
CEIVABLY WIN A PLURALITY IN A QUICK NEW ELECTION, IF ALL OTHER
FORCES FAILED TO FORM COALITIONS AND PUT UP A LARGE NUMBER
OF CANDIDATES. BUT HE WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FORM AN EFFECTIVE
GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD HOLD BOLIVIA TOGETHER. HIS QUEST FOR
ELECTIONS IN SIX MONTHS ALSO IGNORES THE TIME NEEDED TO RE-DO
BOLIVIA'S FRAUD-PRONE ELECTION LAW AND PRACTICES.

8. IN THIS SITUATION, IT WILL NOT BE CLEAR TO MANY
WELL-MEANING BOLIVIANS THAT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE ELECTIONS
ARE THE BEST COURSE TO UNIFYING A DIVIDED AND TROUBLED
COUNTRY. MILITARY GOVERNMENT HAS SPENT ITSELF, BUT THE
CIVILIAN SECTOR IS NOT FULLY READY TO TAKE OVER. A SHORT,
TRANSITIONAL PEREDA ADMINISTRATION OF TWO YEARS OR LESS,
WITH ELECCTIONS IN 12 TO 18 MONTHS MAY BE THE SOLUTION THAT
MINIMIZES THE INTRA-MILITARY, REGIONAL AND CIVILIAN DIVISIONS THAT
NOW THREATEN BOLIVIA. BUT THERE IS NO GUARANTEE THAT THE
EMBITTERED AND BELEAGUERED ELEMENTS THAT MAKE UP THE CURRENT
ARRAY OF FORCES CAN STEER SAFELY TOWARD THIS SOLUTION.
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